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THE PROTEST

AGAINST

TRACT FOR THE TIMES, No. 90.

RESOLUTION OF

THE HEBDOMADAL BOARD,

AND

MR. NEWMAN'S LETTER TO THE VICE-CHANCELLOR.

OXFORD,

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY J. VINCENT.

1841.

TRACT FOR THE TIMES, No. 90.

To the Editor of the "Tracts for the Times."

SIR,

Our attention having been called to No. 90 in the series of "Tracts for the Times, by Members of the University of Oxford," of which you are the editor, the impression produced on our mind by its contents is of so painful a character, that we feel it our duty to intrude ourselves briefly on your notice. This publication is entitled "Remarks on certain Passages in the Thirty-nine Articles;" and, as these Articles are appointed by the statutes of the University to be the text-book for tutors in their theological teaching, we hope that the situations we hold in our respective colleges will secure us from the charge of presumption in thus coming forward to address you.

The tract has, in our apprehension, a highly dangerous tendency, from its suggesting that certain very important errors of the Church of Rome are not condemned by the Articles of the Church of England:

for instance, that those Articles do not contain any condemnation of the doctrines—

1. Of Purgatory,
2. Of Pardons,
3. Of the Worshipping and Adoration of Images and Relics,
4. Of the Invocation of Saints,
5. Of the Mass,

as they are taught authoritatively by the Church of Rome; but only of certain absurd practices and opinions, which intelligent Romanists repudiate as much as we do. It is intimated, moreover, that the declaration prefixed to the Articles, so far as it has any weight at all, sanctions this mode of interpreting them, as it is one which takes them in their “liter and grammatical sense,” and does not “affix any new sense” to them. The tract would thus appear to us to have a tendency to mitigate, beyond what charity requires, and to the prejudice of the pure truth of the gospel, the very serious differences which separate the Church of Rome from our own, and to shake the confidence of the less learned members of the Church of England in the scriptural character of her formularies and teaching.

We readily admit the necessity of allowing that liberty, in interpreting the formularies of our Church, which has been advocated by many of its most learned bishops and other eminent divines; but this tract puts forth new and startling views as to the extent to which that liberty may be carried. For if we are right in our apprehension of the author’s

meaning, we are at a loss to see what security would remain, were his principles generally recognised, that the most plainly erroneous doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome might not be inculcated in the lecture-rooms of the University, and from the pulpits of our churches.

In conclusion, we venture to call your attention to the impropriety of such questions being treated in an anonymous publication, and to express an earnest hope that you may be authorized to make known the writer's name. Considering how very grave and solemn the whole subject is, we cannot help thinking that both the Church and the University are entitled to ask that some person, besides the printer and publisher of the tract, should acknowledge himself responsible for its contents.

We are, Sir,

Your obedient humble Servants,

T. T. CHURTON, M. A.

Vice-Principal and Tutor of Brase-nose College.

H. B. WILSON, B. D.

Fellow and Senior Tutor of St. John's College.

JOHN GRIFFITHS, M. A.

Sub-Warden and Tutor of Wadham College.

A. C. TAIT, M. A.

Fellow and Senior Tutor of Balliol College.

At a Meeting of the Vice-Chancellor, Heads of Houses, and Proctors, in the Delegates' Room, March 15th, 1841.

Considering that it is enjoined in the Statutes of this University, (Tit. III. Sect. ii. Tit. IX. Sect. ii. §. 3. Sect. v. §. 3.) that every Student shall be instructed and examined in the Thirty-nine Articles, and shall subscribe to them; considering also that a Tract has recently appeared, dated from Oxford, and entitled “Remarks on certain Passages in the Thirty-nine Articles,” being No. 90 of the Tracts for the Times, a series of anonymous Publications, purporting to be written by Members of the University, but which are in no way sanctioned by the University itself;

Resolved, That the modes of interpretation, such as are suggested in the said Tract, evading rather than explaining the sense of the Thirty-nine Articles, and reconciling subscription to them, with the adoption of errors, which they were designed to counteract, defeat the object, and are inconsistent with the due observance of the above-mentioned Statutes.

P. WYNTER,
Vice-Chancellor.

MR. VICE-CHANCELLOR,

I write this respectfully to inform you, that I am the author, and have the sole responsibility, of the Tract on which the Hebdomadal Board has just now expressed an opinion, and that I have not given my name hitherto, under the belief that it was desired that I should not. I hope it will not surprise you if I say, that my opinion remains unchanged of the truth and honesty of the principle maintained in the Tract, and of the necessity of putting it forth. At the same time I am prompted by my feelings to add my deep consciousness that every thing I attempt might be done in a better spirit, and in a better way; and, while I am sincerely sorry for the trouble and anxiety I have given to the members of the Board, I beg to return my thanks to them for an act, which, even though founded on misapprehension, may be made as profitable to myself as it is religiously and charitably intended.

I say all this with great sincerity, and am,

Mr. Vice-Chancellor,

Your obedient Servant,

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN.

*Oriel College,
March 16th, 1841.*

